

Members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Senator Cathy Osten, Senator Paul Formica, and Representative Toni Walker, Tri-Chairs

Subject: Restoration of Funding for the Connecticut Humanities Council Inc. within the budget of the Department of Economic & Community Development

Submitted by: Angela George, Colchester Historical Society

I am very concerned about the proposed budget cuts that will gravely affect Connecticut Humanities. CT Humanities has been a significant resource to local heritage organizations. As Co-President of the Colchester Historical Society, I have been privileged to participate in StEPs-CT, an outstanding two-year program for heritage organizations. StEPs-CT has allowed small all-volunteer organizations like ours to learn best practices and improve our organizations. We can now provide better programs to our community. We are better able to tell our audiences our local stories and preserve our heritage through our unique collections and images.

Through grant opportunities from CT Humanities, we have received the needed funds to help us. We recently were awarded a Quick Grant for a wonderful small exhibit highlighting the town's rich history by using vintage postcards. Another, a Wayfinding Grant, made our museum building more inviting and easier to find. We are now planning a new exhibit, telling a significant story about the early education of Afro-Americans in the region. Our plans to conduct scholarly research for the original early 19th century schoolhouse await notification of award status from CT Humanities.

As a small town institution with a budget of less than \$30,000, our funding sources are very limited. We are supported only through our own fund-raising. CT Humanities has been an important source of funding that has allowed us to enhance our programs for the public. We design all our programs specifically to meet our mission to educate the community.

In order to engage one of our most important audience groups, the schools, we must reach out in several ways. We work directly with the Colchester schools to provide historical resources. We are most proud of our annual 3rd Grade Tour that is being improved to meet the latest new state-wide Social Studies curriculum. We also participate on the Teach-It website a digital website for teachers and students featuring primary resource documents and artifacts. For example, a wonderful primary resource book, a detailed 18th century Colchester general store ledger, can be viewed directly on this site. Teach-It, an on-line resource tool, is part of CT Humanities' ConnecticutHistory.org website. It follows the state Department of Education's new social studies guidelines for our public schools. With CT Humanities as a partner, Colchester is now able reach farther to teachers and schools throughout the state.

Please restore the \$1.73 million appropriation for Connecticut Humanities that was originally part of the FY2016-17 budget. Without a future grant pool, small heritage organizations, like the Colchester Historical Society, will be severely limited in the ability to provide enhanced programs to our communities.

Thank you.

Angela George

Colchester, CT

Attachment:

Letter from Georgeanne Liverant, Colchester Historical Society, Co-President